539 THERE was or there was not in ancient times a boy living near to Hilla, and only on God is there belief. Now, the name of this boy was Maqdad. He was the son of a great warrior, but his father was slain in battle, and there was no one to bring money or food to their house. So the boy Maqdad hired himself out to the shepherds and he used to take the sheep out in the morning and bring them back at night, and he earned enough to buy a little food for his mother and himself.

One day, when he reached the age of sixteen years, his mother called him, and told him to open a great chest [411] which lay in their house. He opened the chest and found in it a sword of the finest Damascus steel with a hilt of gold, and a shield of leather and iron, studded with gold, a great spear, a dagger wrought in silver, a rich saddle, a mace of the finest teakwood, studded with iron, and all the accoutrements of a warrior.

Then Maqdad's mother said to him: On that wretched day that your father was carried dead into our house I took these weapons from him and from his horse and cleansed them of his blood, and set them in this chest, that one day you might be a mighty warrior in his place. And here is a bag of gold which I took from his body, and I have not spent a single coin from it, though in all these years we have never eaten meat, but only dates and rice and milk and that food which is suitable for the poor. Now take this bag of gold and buy the best horse in the land. Then shall you ride out to the north. For know you that the army of the Shah of the Persians is camped upon the River Tigris, and the Arabs of the great tribes, of Al Fetla, of As Shammar, of Ed Dulaim, are riding against the Persians and are raiding and harrying them that they may be driven from this Arab land.

8:Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

on you peace, and the Mercy of God, and His Blessing. I am Thamir your father, O my son. Enter the guest tent and meet your ancestors. And Maqdad and Ibn Ali entered the guest tent and saluted the assembly.

And there were there seated Degaither and Mansur and Maqdad the son of Degaither and Degaither the son of Mansur and Mansur the son of Qais and Qais the son of Hamed, and Hamed the Lame and Mansur the Father of the Sword, and they all returned the salutations of Maqdad and Ibn Ali and bade them to be seated and they brought for them coffee. And Mansur the Father of the Sword spoke and said: Before the rising of the sun we must fold our tents and load our camels and depart for Paradise. Therefore, draw your sword, O Maqdad, that we may teach you the art of a warrior. Then Maqdad drew his sword and they came at him and taught him the use of the sword. Then he drew his dagger and they taught him to use the dagger. Then he took his mace and they taught him the use of the mace. Then they taught him the use of the spear, and they taught him many tricks which are now forgotten amongst men. Then they taught him how to place troops in battle and how to command an army, and they taught him from their wisdom the entire art of war. And in this manner five hours passed and it was the eleventh hour of night.

Then Thamir said to his son Maqdad: Sleep now, O my beloved son, for you are tired and we also have a journey before us. And they brought blankets and Maqdad and Ibn Ali laid themselves down to sleep in the great guest tent, though first Maqdad embraced and kissed his father and his grandfather and all his ancestors. And Maqdad and Ibn Ali slept for two hours until the sun arose and grew hot and it was the second hour of day. And they then

8:Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

X539 when the farmer sows the seed in the field, perhaps the crop will come early in the year or perhaps it will come late, as is the will of God, and in His time. But know you that I am a man and not a boy, as a sown field is different from the desert, and the crop will come in season. And the Sheikh said: Is your face, then, a field? It is as smooth as the skin of a peach. How, then, can you ride with the warriors in the front of the battle? And Maqdad replied and said: I have slain the Persians and I have taken their horses, and I will challenge the bravest of the Persians to single combat and I will kill him even in front of his Shah, that you may believe my words. And the Sheikh agreed and consented to the words of Maqdad, and a challenge was written and sealed, and a boy took it and delivered it to the camp of the Persians, and it was given and read out to the Shah himself.

And the Shah had heard the words of the naked Persian soldier, as to how the beardless boy had slain five skilled men, and he feared Maqdad, and he ordered the bravest and most skilful Persian soldier to prepare for the combat, and his name was Pahlewan. He had slain more than five hundred men in single combat, and truly his name was feared throughout the land. And a day and an hour was fixed and appointed, and a place was arranged on an island in the River Tigris and the day approached. As for the weapons, the combatants were to use any weapon or method of fighting which they preferred.

[411] And Maqdad ordered Ibn Ali to bring him a shield of Damascus steel, and Ibn Ali executed his command and brought him a shield of the finest steel of Damascus, which was convex in shape like a basin. Then Maqdad ordered Ibn Ali to take out the leather lining of the shield and to burnish the inside until it shone like a mirror, and

8;Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

being mentioned in a nursery rhyme which runs:

Cukukhti, wein ukhti?	Dove, where's my sister?
B'il Hilla.	In Hilla.
Sha takal?	What does she eat?
Bajilla.	Beans.
Wein tenam?	Where does she sleep?
Bab Illah	At God's door.

and which continues for several verses.

The mace. Page 71, Line 16. 'A mace of the finest teakwood.'

The mace may almost be said to be a traditional weapon in South Iraq. If you meet an Arab tribesman about his normal daily routine in the countryside, he will probably be armed with a mace and dagger. Rifles are weapons of luxury, to be kept away from dust and damp. Many tribal dances are done with the mace, which is sometimes of solid wood carefully carved, and sometimes, a less beautiful weapon but more dangerous, it is made of a wooden shaft with a ball of lead or pitch at the end.

Page 74, Line 22. 'Maqdad took his course from the wind.'

Skilled desert guides can often recognise a wind as being from a certain quarter by its force, humidity, and temperature. The phrase here implies that the sun was clouded over and Maqdad was finding his way by the wind, which indicates that he had considerable skill. The only people who can use the wind are those who can detect quickly any change in its direction. I remember once asking some Arabs the way to a well, and they told me, Keep the wind on your left cheek. I had to use methods with which I was more familiar.

Page 81, Line 25. 'Now I shall call myself Ibn Ali.'

The kunya, or name defining a person by his relationship to someone else, is recorded both in classical and modern Arabic usage. Ibn Batuta, for example, a famous fourteenth century traveller, is known only by his kunya. The modern tribal practice appears to be to promote a man to a kunya when he becomes the father of a boy. A man who has become father of a boy named Qais will, for example, be hailed by his friends with exceptional heartiness for some weeks afterwards, 'Ahlan wa sahlan ya Ab Qais', and the name may or may not stick